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came to the village and in accommodating strangers while he was away. He told them that disputes were to be referred to the headman immediately. Turning to the new headman he said he had to report anything unusual that occurred in the village, and that he was authorized to arbitrate in small cases in his and surrounding villages.

Kawinga then left the centre of the crowd and went back to where he had been sitting. Then an officiating headman, addressing particularly the women, said, 'Only a few months ago there was a quarrel between the present chief and his elder sisters. These women ran away to Malemia's area in Zomba district without reporting the matter to anyone. This must stop. With effect from to-day any troubles must be brought to the headman without delay: he will settle them. A tree cannot grow without branches and a headman or a chief cannot be known without his people's respect. Do not behave as children. This man cannot do things alone: he must have your help. We leave him in your hands and we do not want to hear about any more trouble. Follow all the instructions the chief has given you.' He took his leave and Nyenje was taken back inside the hut. The people now dispersed to where there was beer and dancing.

The Structural Reincarnation of Village Headmen and Perpetual Relationships

There appear to be a number of significant aspects of the installation ceremonies. First, there is the ritual death and rebirth of the village headman. The heir is 'killed' by a blow with the fist on the forehead, but is reborn the headman. The Yao do not believe that the spirit of the headman is inherited by the heir;[1] he has only eaten the name.[2] But socially he is born again and, logically consistent with this idea, he takes the wives of his predecessor without further marriage negotiation. He also takes over the property of the dead man, his clothes and his huts.

But this structural reincarnation of the headman has the important implication that the headman is immortal. He shares this characteristic with the group of which he is the leader. When

[1] As the Bemba do. A. I. Richards, 'Mother-right among the Central Bantu' in E. E. Evans-Pritchard and others, *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, Kegan Paul (London, 1933).

[2] *Kulya lina* is a synonym for succeeding to headmanship.

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a village dies, so then does the headman die.[1] In his rebirth, he occupies the status that his predecessor held before he died, in both the kinship system and the political structure.[2] His mother's brother's children whom he formerly called 'cross-cousin' he now calls 'my children'. His mother's younger brothers whom he previously called *akwelume* (mother's brothers), he now calls 'my younger brothers' (*apwanga*), and so on. By the extension of this principle, an heir succeeds not only to the status of his mother's brother but also to that of the first of his name. Cigwaja VI, for example, calls the descendants of his mother's mother's mother's brother (Cigwaja IV) 'children'. In fact, he calls the children of any Cigwaja 'my children'.

Within the political field the same principle is used in establishing what we may call 'perpetual relationships'.[3] There are some village headmen who express their relationships to each other or to the chief by a kinship term. The headman Majaja, for example, is the 'son' of Nyambi. In fact, the first Majaja to establish a village was the son of the second Nyambi. The present Majaja is the third incumbent and three Nyambis have died since Nyambi II. Nevertheless, by positional succession both of the present incumbents are translated to the formative phase in their relationships, which is thus perpetuated to-day, and will be, in their view, for ever. The present Liwonde calls Kawinga 'elder brother'. Kawinga is in fact his mother's mother's mother's sister's son. The first Liwonde was the first Kawinga's younger brother. They invaded Nyasaland together. At this significant point in their history their relationship became fixed and then perpetuated in the political structure. This relationship, though phrased in a kinship term and moulded to some extent by the norms of kinship behaviour appropriate to the term used, is in reality political, for it fixes the relative positions of two villages through their headmen.

[1] Sometimes after a village has broken up and the name has not been heard of for some years, some survivor revives it and resuscitates the village.

[2] Dr. Richards calls this 'positional succession'. See 'Some Types of Family Structure amongst the Central Bantu' in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde (eds.), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute (London, 1950), 224.

[3] This term was suggested by Dr. I. Cunnison's use of it for a similar practice among the peoples of the Luapula Valley. See his *Local Organization on the Luapula Valley*.